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AUTHOR Michener, Barbara; Belcheir, Marcia J.
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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examined the experiences and impressions of first-time freshmen at Boise State University (BSU) in Idaho. Twenty-five freshmen completed weekly open-ended interviews, kept journals, and participated in an end-of-term group meeting during the fall term of 1996. The results indicated that most students found getting information about BSU fairly straightforward, that the admissions process was uneventful for most, that most students attended BSU because it was close to home, and that first impressions of the university ranged from "big and scary" to only a little confusing. All students seemed to acclimate within several weeks on campus. Almost all of the students reported that it was their decision to go to college and to select their major though their families were supportive. Although most students had positive comments regarding advising, six students said that they received bad advice or no help at all. The 17 students receiving financial aid reported that the financial aid process was the most frustrating part of enrolling at BSU. An appendix provides brief biographies of the 25 participants in the study. (MDM)

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ED 418 614

Lasting First Impressions: A Qualitative Study of Freshmen Arrival on Campus

Research Report 97-04

by:
Barbara Michener
and
Marcia J. Belcheir

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Office of Institutional Assessment
Boise State University
August 1997

IE 030 876

Marcia J. Belcheir

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Abstract

Lasting First Impressions:
A Qualitative Study of Freshmen's Arrival on Campus

This is the first report resulting from a qualitative study of 25 freshmen new to BSU in the fall of 1996. This report looks at the activities involved with student arrival on campus: getting information on BSU, deciding to attend, obtaining advising and financial aid, and selecting and registering for classes. The other reports will look at classroom experiences and at characteristics that related to re-enrollment in the spring, and follow students over a longer period of time.

The data gathered in preparing the report were varied. The students were interviewed weekly by phone, kept journals, and participated in an end-of-term group meeting. Major findings included:

- Most students found getting information about BSU fairly straightforward. This was probably facilitated by the fact that 20 were in-state residents and 9 had been on campus before they enrolled. The admissions process was uneventful for most.

- Most students (11) came to BSU because it was close to home. Other reasons included the lovely setting (6), specific programs offered (6), affordability (5), and the people they met either during initial contact or that they already knew here (5).

- First impressions of BSU ranged from big and scary to only a little confusing. All seemed to acclimate within several weeks to campus.

- Almost all students (24/25) said it was their decision to go to college and to select their major though their family was supportive.

- Advising was a process that was mostly indistinguishable from registration for this group of new students who registered during the summer. Though a majority of comments were positive, six students said they got bad advice or no help. Students who had already selected a major seemed to have an easier time with advising.

- Registration was also viewed in mainly a positive light. Most thought the process went smoothly, and 14 got all the classes they wanted. Only three students thought they had gotten the "run-around."

- For the 17 students receiving financial aid, this was the most frustrating part of enrolling. They described frustrations with communications, the computer system, the staff, and inter-departmental coordination. Strong emotions remained far into the semester on this topic.

Lasting First Impressions

A Qualitative Study of Freshmen's Arrival on Campus

The Freshmen Study initiated Fall semester, 1996 is an attempt to get a picture of the life of a first time freshman student at Boise State University. Open-ended interviews were used to achieve a glimpse of the world through freshmen's eyes. Students were selected from those who had registered by early August, 1996. Twenty five students were chosen to represent the entire Freshmen class in terms of gender, home address, age, academic preparation, and educational goals. Summary student profiles are included in Appendix A at the end of this report.

Data were acquired through weekly interviews conducted with the students during their first fall semester, student journals we received were both positive and negative experiences, and through a group meeting held in December. This in-depth, long term relationship with the students allowed for gathering data not generally available by survey methods. Research found that events, both on campus and in their personal lives, impacted not only their education in progress, but also whether they stayed in school or left.

This report discusses their first interactions with the University. Additional reports will discuss the academic side of campus life and who has returned or left. The Freshmen Study will continue tracking these students until they complete their degree, transfer to another college, or quit school. As of June 1997, they have completed one full academic year.

Since this study utilized open ended interviews, most students had more than one comment about a topic area. Therefore, the comments may add up to more than 25 on any given topic. In addition, very little data was gathered from one student who withdrew early.

Getting information about BSU

Obtaining information about BSU was fairly easy and straightforward for most of these students. Twenty of the students were from Boise, surrounding communities, or from Idaho, so they had some idea what the campus was like, or had been on campus previously for an event. Eleven

freshmen heard about BSU from their high schools, twelve had family or friends who told them about BSU, and 13 of the 25 students lived in the area. Nine students had been on campus to a function before they enrolled. One student said only the application for Admissions was available at Cascade High School, but she wanted more information about BSU. One indicated there was no information available at a College Fair at Las Vegas, and seven said they wanted more information than the admissions forms, and would like to have it sooner. A strong majority indicated that it was not difficult getting information about BSU, as 17 of the students got it through the mail.

Three students said the instructions were unclear, and they felt rushed making decisions. One thought getting accepted took too long, and one wanted more information about class content in order to choose classes for registration.

What drew them to BSU instead of other institutions

These freshmen students chose BSU over other schools for several reasons including convenience of living arrangements, budget factors, and specific educational programs. Eleven students chose it because it was close to home, and five students thought it was affordable. Six students said they liked the area or setting, and six said they came because of specific programs offered including Music, Debate, Biology, Communication, and the GED program. Four students said they came here because they can live at home, work while in school, and save money on expenses. In addition, five students said the people were nice during their initial contact, they liked specific faculty and chose BSU because of them, or that they had friends or family on campus.

Their first impressions of BSU

First impressions of BSU were mixed. Half thought it was big and scary with a lot of students, and maybe a little confusing. Most of these students got acclimated within the first two to three weeks of school and then had few problems finding their way around campus. The other half had been on campus before, thought it was easy to find their way around, and that it was a pretty location or setting. One student, Seth, was particularly interested in the fishing around Boise.

Two students from Nevada liked the lush, green, appearance of the campus setting, and a student from Cascade was looking forward to warmer winters than those in her home town. The one student who attended courses at the Mountain Home Air Base campus commented that the class rooms were old and small, but she planned to eventually enroll in classes at the Boise campus. Barry, who was from Boise, found the University to be better than he imagined and was "proud to be attending school at BSU." Several students came to BSU from small communities and were amazed at the number of people on campus when classes started. It seemed large, "busy," "hectic," "overwhelming," and "scary."

> Sara wondered,
> "Am I ever going to make it through this?"

Their educational goals

There was a consensus that the students decided their own educational goals, whether or not they were going to college, and their chosen major. Almost all of the students (24) said it was their decision to attend college and that they had good family support. One student, Rod, said he was getting pressure to go to school, "or else" he would have to support himself. Six of the 25 students had undeclared majors, and a few more simply chose one to "try out" or "see if it was interesting."

The students who chose majors before registration seemed to have more direction in choosing their course work, and knew how many classes they had to take each semester to graduate in four years. One student said she was advised to enroll in 12 credits her first semester, but returned to enroll in one more class because her parents and her financial aid will only financially support four years of school.

The Admissions process

This process seemed to be an uneventful experience for the majority of the students. Most of the comments were positive and the students had no problems. It was described as "easy," "OK," "self explanatory," and "quick." Most students thought the admissions process went smoothly and was straightforward. They thought the materials were understandable, and most completed the process through the mail with no problems.

> Kate stated that, "The information I received was very informative to me. So, I decided to apply here."

Only four students had critical comments about their experience with the admissions process. All of these students were from outside the city, county, or state. They described their experience as "being confused, and not getting enough help," "frustrating," and working with "unorganized" departments. Jake, who is from Southern Idaho, had to make two trips to Boise for one required paper. He was disappointed BSU would not fax the paperwork to his home town, which would have eliminated those trips.

Rachael, also from out of town, found the process "really confusing." She received her acceptance letter the day after she was supposed to register. She also had to make several trips to Boise to complete admissions.

The Advising process

For many of the students, advising was indistinguishable from the registration process their first semester in college. Many of the students were not familiar with the advising process. They didn't know if they had an advisor, or what that person was supposed to do to help them. Even so, the comments were more positive than critical. There were 15 comments about the advising process as "OK," or "good." When asked about the person who signed their course schedule, 15 of the students said he or she was "helpful" or "OK." Chris said her advisor "talked about my family life, the demands of a small child, and advised me to only take three classes." Half of the

students felt the person who helped them register cared about them as an individual. The most positive comments were a result of a student having an advisor in their chosen major, who provided information on classes required in that major.

> Karen wrote, "The advisor guy showed me all the classes I needed and told me which ones would be good to take my first year."

There were 11 negative comments that the advisor "seemed preoccupied," "acted hurried," "was rude," or "made them feel stupid." Some students commented that the person doing the advising task was another student, and they questioned whether they were getting adequate help. The undecided majors were less likely to perceive the process as a quality experience.

Half of the students said they followed their advisors' advice, which was usually concerning which classes to take, or not to take, the first year. Overall the students' comments were almost split between having a good experience with advising and a bad experience. Half felt it went well, the people were helpful, and they learned about the process. Nearly as many felt they needed more guidance, didn't know what to do, and that it was confusing.

> Laura comments, "I waited for about 2 hours to talk to an advisor, and when it was finally my turn, she wasn't helpful at all."

Six students said they got no help, or bad advice. One of the students, who ended up not returning, said her advisor told her not to take a class because she would arrive 10 minutes late to class because of her work. She talked to her professor and he accepted her late arrival. She commented, "Let the students know they can talk to an advisor before registration." Jake said "It would be a lot easier if I had an advisor to talk to and to learn the ropes a lot better" first semester. A 4.0 student said he wished he could meet with his advisor, then go home and choose his classes. Several students wanted more time to decide on which classes to take.

Kate, who was very shy, felt her advisor was rude to her because she didn't know the answers to his questions, and didn't know what to do. He signed her up for Anatomy, which she thought would be too difficult, and the class frustrated her all semester. She changed to the College of Applied Technology at semester time in dental assisting.

For the students who registered at Orientation, the advising process was sometimes too fast. It may be necessary to decide whether to make it more visible, that is, an identifiable, separate step in the registration process, or to merely incorporate it the first semester as a signature process only, and then assign advisors before spring registration. Several students expressed a desire to meet with an advisor before they registered the first time freshman year.

The Registration process

For the first time freshmen, this process was not an insurmountable task. There were more positive experiences than negative ones. The majority of the students described the registration process as "simple," "easy," "friendly," "good," or "went smoothly." Just under half of the comments were critical of the process. They told of long waits, unfriendly staff, orientation going too fast, and just being confused about what to do and where to go. Fourteen students said they got the classes they wanted. Three students didn't get into classes because they were full. Others said they wanted different sections, or times, or didn't pass pretests for math or English. Students were understanding of the lack of choices because of the large numbers of people registering.

The majority of students felt they did not get the run-around at registration. Of the three who thought they did, it was because they were confused and they felt they didn't get enough help.

> Laurel said,
> "I didn't know who to go to with questions."

The cashier, or payment experience, was described as "good" or "OK" for 19 of the students, and "bad" for five of the students. When it went easily, it was because the students sent their

payment through the mail, or paid at registration. There were 11 critical comments including frustration with the financial aid office, the University being unorganized between departments, and of being helped by unfriendly staff.

More than half of the students were able to register in one or two hours. Those who took longer felt that the large numbers of students, waiting for advisors, and having too few computers slowed them down. However, most were understanding of the process in light of so many students.

A majority, or 14 students, attended Freshmen Orientation. Most of those students also registered at Orientation. Twelve said the information offered at Orientation was beneficial to them. Nine liked the information about the campus, and three got information about their major department. Of those who did not think it was of value, three said the presenter went too fast, one said they should give out more information, one said to make the map bigger and easier to read, and one wanted the catalog explained better. Seth said to "Either slow orientation down, or have the advisor do it for you."

When asked how registration could be improved, three students suggested registration by phone; five students wanted an assigned time with an advisor, preferably before registration; five students wanted more advisors, so the process would go faster; three students wanted the "departments linked together better," and two students said there was a shortage of computers.

The Financial Aid process

A majority of the students in this study, 17 of 25, are receiving financial aid of some kind to attend BSU. There were more critical comments than positive ones about this procedure. Students expressed frustrations with lack of communication and indicated the problems with the computer system, the staff, and interdepartmental coordination. The negative experiences were memorable to several students well into the fall semester, and students had strong emotions over these encounters. It was described by nine students as "confusing," "complicated," and

"frustrating." Two students said the summer financial aid staff was not very friendly or helpful, and "didn't seem to know what was going on."

> Rachael said, "I got my financial aid two weeks late because of their confusion on whether or not I was accepted."

On the positive side, half of the students thought the office was helpful and friendly. Most students felt they did not get the run-around. Seven students thought the process was easy. For the four students with the Western Undergraduate Exchange grants, the process was painless. It involved simply checking a box on their admissions form.

More than half of the students said they were receiving other kinds of support to attend college including parents' financial support, summer jobs, and scholarships from high school, private groups, and BSU. Eighteen of the 25 students said they would be applying for aid in the future. With such a high percentage of students using the financial aid office, the importance of first impressions was significant. Several of the frustrations experienced by the students were a result of lack of coordination between offices, or departments, unfriendly staff, and computer failure.

Summary

The first interactions that freshmen students have with the University as they gain admittance, arrive at BSU, register for classes, and acquire financial aid impact their first impressions of the University as a whole. In this study overall, those impressions were positive, but there were also areas for improvement. According to the students, coordination between departments, especially the admissions offices, registrar's office, financial aid office, advising, and dormitories is crucial and could be improved. Forms of simplification, such as faxing documents to out of town students or phone registration, could make the processes less cumbersome for the student and the University.

Since the majority of students at BSU come from a local perspective, city, county, or state, a general knowledge about the campus is common. This should not be taken for granted, however, and extra help may need to be shown to out of the area, first time students. Rural backgrounds of some students make arrival at BSU into a sea of 15,000 students an overwhelming event. Additional student helpers, extra staff, and faculty could be available during registration to act as ambassadors and assist newcomers with questions.

First impressions were long lasting in this study. When processes went smoothly, the student was proud to be at BSU. When processes were frustrating, the student's pride in the institution was diminished.

Appendix A

Appendix A
STUDENTS IN FRESHMEN STUDY

STEPHANIE is a 25 year old mother of a two year old, who doesn't work outside of her home. Her husband works at Mountain Home Air Force Base, where they also live. He doesn't have a college degree, but is very supportive and helps with babysitting so she can study, go to class, and go to the computer lab to write. Her major is criminal justice. Federal loans pay for her education. Her biggest challenge is finding enough time for family, home and school. She has met other men and women on the base who are also taking college courses, and has established friendships with them. Her registration was not smooth, having to register twice. She felt she got the run-around from the financial aid department, and commented that professors at the Base campus aren't accessible because they don't keep office hours there. She had major concerns with her English professor, and felt she was not getting a good basis in writing in preparation for the rest of her college studies. She feels it is her responsibility to keep a balance in her life in order to stay on her present schedule to graduate in four years, and has higher expectations for herself now than when she started college. She believes it's the University's responsibility to provide good teachers so that she will get her money's worth, and also to make it easy to talk to the administration.

NICOLE is a 19 year old, single female exchange student from another country. She is not looking forward to the cold winters in Boise. She is receiving government aid and is a biology major. This is the first time she has lived away from home and family and is in the University dorms. BSU and Boise seem very large to her, and everything is a new experience, but she enjoys people of different cultures. She explored all services provided by the University, and found jobs on campus. She struggled with her first job because of her imperfect English. By the end of the first semester she had accumulated both positive experiences and negative ones including social diversity, friendly people, language misunderstandings, discrimination, and date rape of a friend. She is considering moving off campus next semester to save money and she doesn't like the dorm food. She has joined the Spanish Club (OELA) and the Pool Club, where she won a pool tournament. She has not yet determined the appropriate amount of time to allocate to studies, social life, and exploration. Her daily schedule begins at noon and ends at 2:00 or 3:00 am. She is tired a lot and has been ill with colds, flu, and infections. Her church affiliation gives her comfort when she misses home and helps to keep her priorities straight. Her language difference makes classes harder, but she has introduced herself to all of her professors and they have provided extra help to be sure she understands the concepts studied. She is impressed with her professors because she feels they care for the students and try to help them be successful. She wants to stay here to finish her education. She knows she must study everyday, talk to her professors, and learn about the campus to be successful. She thinks the University should provide good knowledge of subject areas and get the students involved in learning.

LAUREL is an 18 year old single female from Boise. She is an undecided major, and lives at home with her parents who pay for her tuition and books. She works 26 hours per week in retail sales and has found that it is very stressful getting schoolwork done. She is not sure college is the right direction for her to be taking, and is not enjoying it very much. Living at home limits her socialization, and she has not joined any clubs, organizations, or study groups to meet new people. She says she has no social life since high school, and that it's hard making the change to an adult with all the responsibilities. She doesn't like most of her professors, thinks some of the tasks in the classroom are "stupid", but likes the Psychology class and professor because you can apply the concepts to real life.

JAKE is an 18 year old, single male from southern Idaho, living in the dorms. He is a music education major, and knew his BSU music professor while in high school, which had a strong influence in his decision to attend BSU. He is getting Federal loans and a marching band scholarship, and is not working fall semester. He had stressful interactions with the registrars office, financial aid office, and cashier's office, which made a negative first impression. He feels his performance is "excellent" in his classes, and is impressed with his professors as being gifted and caring for the students. He has met new friends and has joined social and academic clubs. He "loves the University", even though he has negative attitudes about the parking, dorm computers, registration, and dorm food tickets. Overall, he seems

well adjusted to his first year of college, is enjoying his classes, feels he is progressing toward his degree, and is having fun. He is glad the University is interested in doing this study and getting students' input.

KAREN is an 18 year old, single female who lives at home with her parents, who are paying for her education. She works for them on the weekends. She was originally registered for 14 credits in the pre-dental program. She has a brother in the Vo-tech school and knows a few students on campus, but is not inclined to socialize or meet new friends. Being at BSU is scary for her and she is extremely shy and refuses to participate in class. She has refused to speak or answer questions, or give papers orally in class. She even resorted to writing a response on paper for a professor in a class. She attended the BSU workshop on self esteem in order to feel more comfortable. She got a job as a salesperson to learn how to talk to people, and feels proud to be working. She was confused during registration, orientation, and advising. She felt she got bad advice when her advisor signed her up for an Anatomy course. She was afraid it would be too difficult for her, and it was. She struggled with all of her classes this semester and didn't see a need for taking the core classes at all. She likes her Psychology class, because the professor makes it fun. She feels insecure in public settings, using descriptive words like "scared", "nervous", "sick", "uncomfortable", "bored". Some negative experiences included a parking ticket, failing tests, typing papers, feeling stressed getting the homework done. She stated that "everything is against me." She changed from the academic school to the School of Applied Technology at the beginning of spring semester.

GORDON is a 19 year old single male from Boise, who plans to live at home with his parents through four years of college. He has a Dean's scholarship, the "Most Valuable Athlete" scholarship from high school, and also works to pay for his education. He is an undeclared major. He wants to get a degree so he won't have to work at labor intensive jobs. His current job consists of 18 hours per week at night loading freight and he gets only five hours of sleep per night. He currently has money saved up for his 3rd and 4th semesters. He rides his bike from West Boise to BSU, about a 20 minute ride. His friends are not going to college, but are supportive. He thinks BSU is a good college, not scary for him, and his entrance to BSU was fairly smooth and pleasant. He likes going to classes, feels comfortable with his professors, and enjoys learning. He believes his responsibility is to "go to class everyday and try his hardest to learn everything he can." He doesn't believe the professors are responsible for "babying" the students. He described this semester as fast paced and just a bit stressful, but he shows the maturity to manage his tasks

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ANGIE is a 22 year old, single mother of two young children, currently living with her mother in the Treasure Valley, while attending college. She is thankful for her mother's support. She got her GED, and is getting government aid for living, (AFDC), and Federal loans for education expenses. She is really concerned about accumulating large debts for her education and paying them back later. She is a Criminal Justice major, and is not working out of the home. The children go to a government day care facility. Money is a major factor in her life currently. She viewed BSU as "scary" and "big", but entrance into the University went smoothly. Her advisor showed special interest in her family responsibilities and gave good advice about classes. She has been appointed President of a BSU club and is looking forward to learning more about the activities at BSU. She shows an involvement with the University, the community, and voted in the national and school elections. She feels she has had a really good experience this semester at BSU and enjoys college. She says she is excited about school, her classes, and professors and is enjoying it "immensely". She appears to have made some bad choices in the past, which she is now trying to remedy by educating herself.

JIM is a 26 year old married male, with a five year old son. He lives in Boise with his family, but is originally from another country. He dropped out of school in the 9th grade and earned his GED through a program at BSU, while working as a dancer to contribute income. They have limited income, and it is a major concern to him that he is not the main wage earner while in school. Entrance to the University went smoothly. He plans to graduate with a Physics degree, which will require several catch-up classes in math. He has a mentor in the Physics Department who has been helpful. He also is working very hard to get A grades so that he can get academic scholarships. He rides his bike and the city bus to the University and to pick up his son from kindergarten and day care. They have one car and his wife needs it to get to work. His family is very important to him and his wife, who has her college degree, is very

supportive. He joined the Spanish club, OELA, and plans to add a Spanish minor to his schedule next semester. He socializes with members of his classes in the SUB, and also talks with his professors there. He voted in the school election and is involved in what is going on around campus. He is excited about going to school, even though it creates a financial hardship. He finds that it is not as scary as he thought it would be, is here to learn all he can from the classes and professors, and enjoys all of them. The professors sense his sincerity and have supported him. He is a sincere, personable individual who has a solid idea of what he wants to do, and is making it happen.

DON is a 19 year old single male from Boise who is living at home with his parents while in school. He is a Pre-forestry major and plans to transfer to the University of Idaho after two years of core classes here. Entrance to BSU went smoothly. He is working while going to school and doesn't have financial aid. He is paying for his own tuition and books. Since he doesn't live on campus, he is aware that he is missing out on certain aspects of college social life. He has found that he must prioritize his social life, studies, and leisure time in order to do his part as a student. His classes are harder than he thought they would be, and not very interesting to him. He has some favorite professors that he has had a chance to visit with concerning his performance. He feels the University Library presents only one side of some concepts like feminism and religion. He thinks the school teaches only one side of many arguments and describes it as "close minded". He feels good about the progress he is making toward his education. One concern was a lack of school spirit, including no visible display of BSU logos on clothing, and instances of negative comments about the University by both students and faculty. He feels the professors should not make negative comments about the facilities, and should encourage the students to feel glad they are attending BSU.

TERESA is an 18 year old single female from Idaho where she was Salutatorian of her class. She said that she received invitations from many other colleges, including full ride scholarships, but wanted to go to school close to home. She also said BSU showed no interest in her and described the University as an "insensitive institution." She has declared a Mass Communication major, and is attending BSU because it is not a "party school." She is getting Federal loans to pay for her college. She is living off campus with two other friends from her home town, and acknowledges that she would feel more a part of the University if she lived on campus. She has not met many students, nor joined any social clubs. She works 16 hours per week off campus. She did not get the treatment she felt she deserved at admissions, registration, advising, etc. She has a special lab project that was very successful for her in high school, wanted BSU to be interested in it, but is disappointed because they haven't shown any interest in it. Her classes are too easy and boring, so she is "miserable." They are so boring she is considering whether to return to BSU or to quit school.

CARL is a 21 year old male from Boise, who plans to live at home with his parents all four years of college in order to save on expenses. He is majoring in electrical engineering and using student loans to finance his education. Entrance to BSU went well, he got good advice, and people were friendly. He works 20 hours a week at Hewlett Packard, which is good training for his degree. He uses the money to support his computer at home and to pay for the Internet. He likes all of his classes, finds them challenging, and likes most of his professors. He is impressed that they are so professional and treat him like an adult. He has rekindled high school friendships and met some new friends at BSU, although he doesn't have much free time with work and school. He seems to know what he wants to accomplish at BSU and should be succussful at it.

LAURA is an 18 year old female from out of state who is living on campus. She compares the dormitory life to "being in prison" because of too many rules, and finds it hard to study at the dorms. She has made a lot of new friends on campus, and plans to join the rugby team next semester. She is an undecided major. Admittance, registration, and financial aid went smoothly, but she thought the advisor seemed uninterested in her and unknowledgeable. She didn't work fall semester, but will need to work in the future to stay in school. Money may be a factor in whether or not she stays in school at BSU. Her classes are easier than she thought they would be, is doing well in them, and is enrolled in Honors classes spring semester. She is considering joining student government

activities. She thinks the University should provide a support network, answer students' questions, and the professors should be sure the students understand the subjects.

KATE is an 18 year old female from out of state who is living on campus. She is a business major with a minor in French. She is getting financial aid and is not working while attending school. She had substantial emotional trauma while starting a new phase of her life due to the death of a mother figure and a serious disability of a friend from a car wreck. She also experienced homesickness even though she chose BSU was because she wanted to be away from home. Admissions was frustrating for her, as people seemed unorganized. The rest of registration went smoothly. She is not working this year, but will work the following years. She had extended problems getting her computer hooked up in the dorms and getting on the Internet. She likes living in the dorms and meeting other students. She has not joined any social or academic groups, but thinks she might be having "too much fun" here and may need to spend more time studying. However, her classes and grades are going well. She is here to learn and is excited to be going to college. There is some stress from the fast pace of the classes, but has vowed to not "slack off." She feels its her responsibility to go to class, study and keep up with the work. She feels she needs to achieve her own goals, and not expect the school to lead you by the hand.

BARRY is an 18 year old male from Boise, living at home with his father. He has lived here all of his life, and his mother got her Masters degree from BSU. He is not receiving any financial aid, and is working on campus to help pay some expenses, although his grandfather is paying his tuition. He is an undeclared major. His admissions and registration went quite smoothly, since his father did it for him while he was out of the country. He reports he only requires five hours of sleep per night, so he has lots of time to get everything done. He had an emotional start to his college life including a funeral of a family member, a wedding, and a fight with his long time girlfriend. He found it hard to concentrate on school work at first. He has friends from high school at BSU and has not met many new ones because he is not on campus very much. College is his main priority and he "likes it a lot." He thinks professors need to provide a good environment in which to study, and make it clear what students are required to do.

PERRY is an 18 year old male from out of state, who is living on campus. He had some disagreements with how the dorms are run and all the rules that apply. His parents wanted him to go to college away from home. He is an undecided major, is receiving financial aid, and is not working while attending college. He plans to get a Masters degree someday. His entrance to the University went smoothly, as people were helpful. Dorm life is good; he is meeting new friends and enjoys events on campus. He plans to join some service organizations next year. He was quite upset because his meal ticket didn't carry over to next semester. He feels he will be unable to use it up in the time left and the money will be wasted. He enjoys his classes and his professors and says his professors are congenial and not prejudiced toward anyone. He is surprised to find a lack of cultural diversity in Boise and he noted the presence of the militia in Idaho. His roommates include two African Americans and one Oriental student. His high school friends at home did not go to college. He feels he has a responsibility to his family to do well and be serious about his classes, since they are paying for it. He feels he is "directly influencing his future" by going to school to better himself.

ROD is an 18 year old male from the Treasure Valley who is living at home with his stepmother and adopted father, while going to school. He is a Psychology major, and is on a National Air Guard scholarship. He works 30+ hours per week on campus, and chose BSU because it was close to home and he could work while going to school. Work is a necessary factor of him going to school. Another reason he chose BSU was because it had a Debate program. He joined as a freshman, which took special permission from the instructor. He said some professors would not work with him on assignments while he was gone on debate trips. He had a friend register him so he had no initial experiences with entering BSU. He drives a car to campus and can always find a parking space. The lecture hall classes were much larger than he expected, but he feels he is doing very well. He thinks the professors are very professional, fair, and keep classes interesting by using humor. His mom in Phoenix is very supportive of him and paid for the first semester. He likes the age diversity on campus and thinks it adds "different spectrums" in class and

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also in debate. He says its "wonderful to have people with different fields, different experiences, different religious groups" to interact with and learn from.

MIKE is a 20 year old male from Boise living at home with his parents. He is a Biology major and receives financial aid and works while attending school. He is getting Federal loans. His mother works at BSU, but neither parent went to college. He has a brother going to BSU and a sister at University of Idaho. He chose this school because it is close to home, is economical, and he can get a good quality education here. He is paying for his education himself by working odd jobs, yard care etc. He wants a college education so that he won't have to work forever at hard physical labor jobs. He is trying to save money to pay for next semester's tuition. His entrance to college was confusing, frustrating, and disappointing, but admits he wasn't very prepared. He had to make several trips to campus to get accepted, advised, and registered. He wishes the University would explain what is needed to the freshmen before they register first semester. Campus was larger than he anticipated, but classes are going better than he expected. He finds all of his classes very interesting, and is impressed with the professors. He thinks they are very knowledgeable about their subjects. He only sleeps about six hours per night so is able to get everything done. He has not joined any social or service clubs and has not met many new friends on campus. Most of his high school friends did not go to college, went directly to work, but are unhappy because the pay is inadequate. He thinks he made the right choice. He thanked the researcher for being able to voice his opinion about being a part of BSU.

SETH is an 18 year old male from southern Idaho, living off campus in an apartment. He is a Business Management major and is taking the GE197 class. He experienced a "fairly straightforward" entrance to the University. He gets no financial aid, and his parents are paying for his education. He says they have an agreement to help him now, then he will take care of them when they are older. He works for his parents during the summer to earn their support in paying for his education. He plans to return to the farm when he graduates from college. His main hobby is fishing. He spent all of his leisure time in Boise looking for and participating in good fishing holes. He regrets not living in the dorms his freshman year because he is not meeting many new friends. He feels he is missing out on some of the fun of being on campus, but thinks it is easier to study in his apartment, the parking is good, and it is within walking distance to campus. He likes the cafeteria food! His study habits needed some improvement, but he has learned how to take notes, how to study for tests, and how to take tests from the GE197 Special Topics class. He likes all of his teachers and all of his classes, and feels he is doing an average job for a freshman. He decided late in the first semester to change to the School of Applied Technology. He feels its his responsibility to learn everything he can from his classes. The University should teach applications to real life. He feels it was good for him to go to school in a different town, to meet different people.

RACHAEL is a 20 year old female from Idaho, living off campus in an apartment. She is an Elementary Education major, and is getting financial aid. She has family and friends here. She found entrance to BSU "really confusing" and instructions "not real clear." She had a friend register for her because she couldn't get to Boise that day, and was told her file was misplaced. At financial aid she had a problem submitting the correct forms. She is on provisional status. Work is a necessary factor of her going to school and she is currently working on campus and for a day care facility. Work makes her schedule very busy and she is tired all the time. She is meeting friends through other friends and from the dorms. Although she is enjoying her classes, she feels "bogged down" and tired of so many hours of studying. Her grades are "pretty good" but her classes are harder than she expected. Her family is supportive of her efforts, but she is concerned about the debt she is building up in student loans to pay for her education. Overall she seems lukewarm about being in school.

SARA is an 18 year old female from out of state, who is living on campus in the dorms. She is an Accounting major, and is receiving financial aid. She chose BSU because she wanted to "get out of town" and go to school where none of her friends were going, and liked BSU when she visited here earlier. Since her graduating class was only 34 students, she found BSU overwhelming. She worked in a gold mine at home, and says she now knows why people go to college. She said everyone was very friendly, entrance went smoothly. She received two scholarships from her

high school. She works during the summer to save money for school, which is tight. She thinks the dorms should try to match roommates better. She had a hard time getting enough sleep, but was able to make friends in the dorm. She says her priority is school, not a social life. She really dislikes the dorm food, and says its always a "surprise", you never know what you are going to get. She said she has to work really hard to get B's in her classes. She is in the Cluster program, GE197 and also Reading and Study Skills. She had a special ongoing problem with her Speech Communications teacher. He was Chinese and she could not communicate with him at all. She likes her other professors and classes. At the end of the semester both of her grandparents were ill and she was concerned about them. She didn't know if she would come back spring semester because of family concerns. She is the first grandchild on both sides to go to college, so her family is very supportive. Because she is so close to her family, she wants to go home often. She feels like going to school is like "being ready for war" - her emotions are being tested all the time. She says she doesn't know if she is ready for college right now, she is "just feeling it out." She found the first semester to be "hectic," but she "survived."

JEFF is an 18 year old male, from southern Idaho and lives in the dorms. He has a twin sister also at BSU. He is receiving financial aid, and is a Marketing major. He is working while attending school at food service, which is a necessary factor of going to school. He is the first generation in his family to go to college, and his family is very supportive. He likes the campus and Boise because "they are so green and pretty." He had good experiences with entrance to BSU, except for financial aid. He said they were "extremely rude" to him and his sister. It was "too much hassle." He is heavily involved with school activities and he enjoys living in the dorms, where he has met many new friends. He has a learning disability, ADHD - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, but says he has learned to work around it by keeping busy. He discussed it with some of his professors, and they were helpful and understanding. He had a problem with his Speech Communications class, which had a professor from Japan. He didn't understand the professor and the professor didn't understand him. He thought he had signed up for easy classes, but none are easy, even though he is getting A's and B's.

CORA is a 32 year old, single mother with two children, originally from the Magic Valley. She is living off campus and working full time at a technology company. She is getting student loans to pay for her education, and is an undeclared major. During the semester she became interested in the nine month program for Surgical Technician training. She needs job skills in a short period of time in order to support her family, which she says is her first priority, since she is the sole wage earner. She felt the entrance process to BSU was stressful. The people who helped her looked stressed, and advising was "chaotic" and frustrating. She found she had too much school work to get done on top of her other responsibilities and did not complete the first term.

SHAUNA is a 28 year old married mother of two children. She was an Education major and had student loans. She was operating a day care business in her home for six children. She found BSU to be very big, very busy, and overwhelming. Her entrance to college went "OK", but financial aid could have gone smoother and been more friendly. She dropped out of school September 19, 1996. The main reason was a heavy work load with family, day care business, and homework. A secondary reason was her English 101 professor, a local high school teacher, whom she described as negative, uncaring, and asked for too much busy work. Shauna did not complete here first term.

KARI is a 32 year old mother with a teenage son. She lives in Treasure Valley so she had to commute to go to school. She had a major in Social Work. She agreed to be part of the study, but from the beginning never responded to the researcher's phone calls. No conversations took place. Messages were left on the answering machine and with her son, but she would not respond to them. She did not complete her first term.

JOHN is an 18 year old male, marketing major from Boise, who has lived here all his life. He chose BSU because it is close to home, and he can work while going to school. He is receiving financial aid, and has moved into an apartment with friends. He is working 40 hours per week in retail. Entrance to BSU was "straightforward." He said he was doing "OK" in his classes except he disliked his English 101 Professor, who is a high school teacher. He

doesn't feel she should be teaching college classes and thinks she is "not on the level" with students. He ended up dropping the class during the semester. He feels like he took on too much with school, work and living on his own. He is not meeting new friends from school because he doesn't spend much time on campus. He doesn't have time for social clubs or service groups. His co-workers are supportive of him going to school. He feels the school should provide good professors, and was offended to have a high school teacher for his English class. John did not return for a second term.

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